REMARKS

INTRODUCTION

Claims 1-9 and 11-30 are pending and under consideration.

Claim 10 has been cancelled.

Claims 16 and 17 have been amended.

No new matter is being presented, and approval and entry are respectfully requested.

REJECTIONS UNDER 35 USC § 102

In the Office Action, at pages 8-9, claims 16-17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as anticipated by Ouchi. This rejection is traversed and reconsideration is requested.

PRIOR ART

Ouchi discusses a system for workflow management. A server with a database handles transfer of a message from one user to a next. The database can be used to both pre-program a route or chain of transfers of a message, and to track the actual transfers of a message as they occur.

Because Ouchi is for workflow processing of a document or message, Ouchi discusses only the sequential transfer and tracking of a message from one user to a single other user (addressee). Ouchi discusses forking a workflow, but the branches of the fork each proceed sequentially from one single addressee to the next.

The sequential non-fork workflow case is summarized by Ouchi's claim 2:

compare the step field with the route,

define the next e-mail address based on the compare,

update the e-mail address to the next e-mail address, and

update the step field to the next step; and

... send the e-mail to the next e-mail address...

The fork workflow case is summarized by Ouchi's claim 11:

wherein the route splits into a plurality of branch routes at a fork e-mail address ... for at least one branch route:

copy the e-mail,

set the step field of the e-mail to the next step of the branch route, and

set the e-mail address to the next e-mail address of the branch route.

(1)   ONLY ONE ADDRESSEE RECEIVES ANY GIVEN MESSAGE SENT BY OUCHI

Claim 16 recites "a receiver state list containing names of a plurality of receivers each having received an interpersonal message jointly addressed to the receivers". Claim 17 recites "each receiver having received an interpersonal message jointly addressed to the receivers". In other words, claims 16 and 17 recite one message jointly addressed to and received by the receivers.

In Ouchi, the receivers receive the message one after the other. Each sent and received message has only one addressee. In the non-fork workflow case, there is only one addressee for any given transferal of the message. That is to say, the manager server addresses any given message transmission to only one addressee. In the case of forked workflow, (forking the workflow or route of a message to two different uses), two separate workflow branches are started, each has its own copy of the message, and each such message is addressed only to the next addressee of its respective branch. The message copies are not jointly addressed to the two users, but rather each copy is separately addressed to the single next addressee of its branch or fork.

Furthermore, each different transmission in a step of a sequence uses a different message (see col. 6, lines 48-53). Therefore, the sequential steps of different transmissions do not together constitute a single message with multiple addressees.

(2)   ARBITRARY ORDER OF RESPONSES

Claim 16 and 17 recite that "the responses capable of being made in an arbitrary order with respect to each other". In Ouchi, the responses, like the messages sent, are sent in a sequential according to a pre-determined route. The proposed receiver state list of Ouchi is only a history of the workflow route of the different messages.

(3)   DISPLAY OF STATE LIST

Claims 16 and 17 also recite "enabling display of, in a mutually associated manner, the interpersonal message relating to the business activity and the receiver state list, where the display is enabled on each of the terminal apparatuses belonging to a sender and the plurality of the receivers of the interpersonal message relating to the business activity". In other words, both a sender and recipients can view the message and the receiver state list, in a mutually associated manner. Ouchi does not discuss either displaying a receiver state list, or displaying it in mutual association with the message. Ouchi does not discuss or suggest using routes are for any other purpose than setting and tracking workflow of a form or document.

(4)   NEW CLAIMS 28 AND 29

Claim 28 recites that "a stored state indicates a degree to which a recipient has completed an activity discussed in the e-mail message received by the recipients, and where the interactive input is inputted using interactive content displayed with the e-mail message". Swenson discusses indicating completion or non-completion of a task and does not use an e-mail message. As discussed above, Ouchi does not discuss multiple recipients or addressees of one message. Neither reference discusses interactive content displayed with an e-mail message, or "allowing the recipients of the e-mail message to view a list of the stored states of the recipients of the e-mail message".

CONCLUSION

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: __11 March 2003__   By: _____

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please AMEND the following claims:

16.   (FOUR TIMES AMENDED) A message processing apparatus for processing a plurality of interpersonal messages transmitted from a plurality of terminal apparatuses, the message processing apparatus comprising:

a preparation unit preparing a receiver state list containing names of a plurality of receivers each having received an interpersonal message <u>jointly</u> addressed to the receivers, where the interpersonal message relates to a business activity, and where each name is associated with a piece of information indicating a state of the respective receiver, each piece of information being based on a response by each of the receivers of the interpersonal message, <u>where the responses capable of being made in an arbitrary order with respect to each other</u>; and

a message management unit enabling display of the interpersonal message in mutual association with the receiver state list, where the displaying is enabled on a terminal apparatus belonging to a sender and is enabled on the terminal apparatuses of the plurality of receivers of the interpersonal message relating to the business activity .

17.   (FOUR TIMES AMENDED) A message management method for managing a plurality of interpersonal messages transmitted from a plurality of terminal apparatuses, the message management method comprising:

preparing a receiver state list containing names of a plurality of receivers, each receiver having received an interpersonal message <u>jointly addressed to the receivers and</u> relating to a business activity, the receiver state list also containing individual states of each of the respective receivers, each individual state being mutually associated with the name of a corresponding receiver, where each individual state of each receiver indicates a status of that receiver's activity regarding the business activity, and where the indicating is based on responses received from the receivers in response to the interpersonal message, <u>where the responses capable of being made in an arbitrary order with respect to each other</u>; and

enabling display of, in a mutually associated manner, the interpersonal message relating to the business activity and the receiver state list, where the display is enabled on each of the terminal apparatuses belonging to a sender and the plurality of the receivers of the interpersonal message relating to the business activity.

28.   (AS UNAMENDED) A method of providing e-mail information, comprising:

based on interactive input generated by recipients of an e-mail message when viewing the e-mail message, storing states of the recipients, where a stored state indicates a degree to which a recipient has completed an activity discussed in the e-mail message received by the recipients, and where the interactive input is inputted using interactive content displayed with the e-mail message; and

allowing the recipients of the e-mail message to view a list of the stored states of the recipients of the e-mail message.

29.   (AS UNAMENDED) A method according to claim 29, wherein the state of activity reflects a recipient's determination that the recipient has completed the activity.